

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 OMB-01 /091 W

----- 014295

P R 141931Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0977

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 14432

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR FR LE

SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON LEBANON

SUMMARY: QUAI OFFICIAL SAYS THAT GEORGES GORSE PROBABLY WILL NOT GO TO LEBANON UNTIL FRANGIE RESIGNS. AT PRESIDENTIAL URGING, THE QUAI IS STUDYING THE IDEA OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN A SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CONTROLS. THE QUAI SEES MAJOR DRAWBACKS TO THIS IDEA, BUT HAS DISCUSSED IT WITH SEVERAL ARAB GOVERNMENTS. EGYPT SEEMS TO HAVE NO OBJECTIONS, SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAQ ARE "RESERVED," WHILE SYRIA'S REACTION IS DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE. NO DECISION ON SECURITY CONTROL MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN BEFORE GORSE'S MEETING WITH SARKIS. THE QUAI BELIEVES SARKIS WILL HAVE TO ACT VIGOROUSLY WITH THE PALESTINIANS, THE MOSLEM PROGRESSIVES AND THE CHRISTIANS.

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HIS MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM WILL BE WITH JUMBLATT. SYRIAN,

SOVIET AND OTHER ARAB ATTITUDES WILL ALSO AFFECT SARKIS' SUCCESS. WHILE THE QUAI THINKS THE TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN ANY SECURITY CONTROL SYSTEM, GISCARD, FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, MAY OPT FOR GREATER FRENCH INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON. END SUMMARY

1. WHILE THE FRENCH PRESS CONTINUES TO TALK ABOUT GORSE'S DEPARTURE NEXT WEEK FOR TALKS WITH BOTH FRANGIE AND SARKIS, QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE NEAR EAST, HENRI SERVANT, TOLD EMBOFF MAY 13 THAT GORSE PROBABLY WILL NOT GO TO LEBANON UNTIL SARKIS HAS ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY. THE FRENCH HOPE FRANGIE WILL RESIGN NOW, BUT THEY FEAR THAT HE WILL TRY TO HOLD ON, USING AMONG OTHER PRETEXTS THE ARGUMENT THAT THERE IS NO LEGAL PROVISION FOR HIS SERVING LESS THAN HIS CONSTITUTIONALLY-SET TERM, THE LAW UNDER WHICH SARKIS WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT NOTWITHSTANDING.

2. PRESSED AS TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STATEMENTS BY GORSE AND OTHER FRENCH OFFICIALS THAT FRANCE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THE IDEA OF PARTICIPATING IN A SYSTEM OF SECURITY CONTROLS, SERVANT SAID THAT INDEED THOUGHT IS BEING GIVEN TO MANY POSSIBILITIES. THE PARLIAMENT, BOTH THE OPPOSITION AND SOME MEMBERS OF THE MAJORITY, LIKE FORMER PM MICHEL DEBRE, AND FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION ARE PUTTING GREAT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO "DO SOMETHING" IN LEBANON. HENCE, AT GISCARD'S URGING, THE IDEA OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN SOME SORT OF SECURITY FORCE, PERHAPS UN-SPONSORED OR COMPOSED OF ARABS AND EUROPEANS IN SOME OTHER INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK, WAS BEING EXAMINED EVEN THOUGH THE QUAI WORKING LEVEL HAS SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT ITS WORTH.

3. IN THE FIRST PLACE, SERVANT SAID, LEBANON AND THE ARAB STATES DO NOT WANT TO GO TO THE UN. THIS BEING SO, SERVANT WONDERED UNDER WHAT OTHER INTERNATIONAL SCREEN A SECURITY FORCE COULD BE CONSTITUTED. IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT A MILITARY FORCE LARGE ENOUGH REALLY TO CONTROL THE SITUATION WAS NOT IN THE CARDS. A SMALLER FORCE DESIGNED SIMPLY TO POLICE A CEASE-FIRE WOULD BE

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PRACTICAL ONLY IF ALL THE PARTIES INVOLVED, LEBANESE, PALESTINIAN AND SYRIAN, WERE PREPARED TO OBSERVE A CEASE-FIRE. IN SUCH CASE, THOUGH, AN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY FORCE WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY SINCE THE PARTIES THEMSELVES COULD POLICE IT BY REACTIVATING THE TRIPARTITE COMMISSION APPARATUS ALREADY ESTABLISHED.

4. SERVANT ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE FRENCH HAVE BEEN

IN TOUCH WITH SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL SECURITY MEASURES. HE SAID THAT EGYPT APPEARS TO HAVE NO OBJECTIONS, THAT SAUDI ARABIA IS "PROBABLY RESERVED," AND THAT IRAQ IS "MORE RESERVED." SYRIA'S REACTION IS DIFFICULT TO EVALUATE. ON THE ONE HAND, IT WOULD LIKE ITS ACTION IN LEBANON TO HAVE A GUARANTY; ON THE OTHER HAND, IT DOES NOT WANT TO LOSE ITS FREEDOM OF ACTION.

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THE FRENCH REALIZE, SERVANT ADDED, THAT SYRIA MIGHT IN TURN LIMIT ANY GUARANTOR'S FREEDOM OF ACTION.

5. SERVANT ASSURED EMBOFF THAT NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN MADE ON THE SECURITY CONTROL QUESTION AND THAT ONE OF

THE CHIEF PURPOSES OF GORSE'S MISSION WILL BE TO DETERMINE SARKIS'S ATTITUDE. FRANCE WILL BE PRUDENT ABOUT TAKING PART IN ANY SECURITY FORCE AND WILL WANT TO ENSURE THAT A FRENCH PRESENCE IS REALLY DESIRED. NOTHING WILL BE DONE BEFORE GORSE'S MEETING WITH SARKIS.

6. TURNING TO SARKIS' PROSPECTS, SERVANT SAID THAT HE WOULD NEED TO ACT VIGOROUSLY ON THREE FRONTS: THE PALESTINIANS, THE MOSLEM PROGRESSIVES AND THE CHRISTIANS. CONFIDENTIAL

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AT THE MINIMUM, SARKIS WOULD HAVE TO ASSURE ARAFAT THAT THE PLO, WHICH HAS LOST MORE MEN THAN COMMONLY THOUGHT, WILL CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE FACILITIES AND PRIVILEGES GUARANTEED BY THE 1969 CAIRO AGREEMENT.

7. SARKIS'S MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM WOULD BE WITH JUMBLATT SINCE DESPITE THEORIES TO THE CONTRARY, SERVANT SAID, THE FIGHT IN LEBANON IS BASICALLY RELIGIOUS. TO NEUTRALIZE JUMBLATT, SARKIS MUST PROMISE POLITICAL REFORMS WHICH REFLECT THE MOSLEM MAJORITY. SERVANT DOUBTED THAT JUMBLATT WOULD NOW BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT PARITY WITH CHRISTIANS AS PROVIDED IN THE FRANGIE-ASAD ACCORDS.

8. AS FOR THE CHRISTIANS, SERVANT THOUGHT THAT SARKIS HAS THEIR CONFIDENCE AND MIGHT BE THE BEST MAN TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY CONCESSIONS. HE NOTED THAT THIS IS THE VIEW OF ONE COLONEL LAROOD (PHONETIC), FORMER HEAD OF LEBANESE ARMY INTELLIGENCE WHO HAS BEEN IN SPAIN RECENTLY (PROBABLY PURCHASING ARMS) AND WHO PLANS TO RETURN TO LEBANON WHEN SARKIS ASSUMES POWER. SERVANT NOTED THAT SARKIS' SUCCESS ALSO CAN BE AFFECTED BY SYRIAN, SOVIET AND OTHER ARAB ATTITUDES. FOR EXAMPLE, ASAD COULD LIMIT ARMS SHIPMENTS, PROVIDED HE FELT FREE AT HOME TO DO SO.

9. COMMENT: THE QUAI SHARES WITH THE ELYSEE THE DESIRE FOR FRANCE TO HAVE A LARGE PIECE OF THE ACTION IN THE NEAR EAST, INCLUDING LEBANON. BUT QUAI OFFICIALS ARE KEENLY AWARE OF THE PITFALLS IN LEBANON AND LESS SUBJECT TO POLITICAL PRESSURES TO "DO SOMETHING" THERE THAN IS GISCARD. WE THINK THAT THE QUAI BELIEVES THE TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN ANY SYSTEM OF SECURITY CONTROLS. GISCARD, HOWEVER, IS GRASPING FOR SUCCESS IN LEBANON THAT WOULD STILL HIS CRITICS AND, HOPEFULLY, IMPROVE HIS IMAGE AS A FORCEFUL LEADER AT HOME. THUS THE FRENCH MAY BECOME MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN LEBANON. GAMMON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PARIS14432
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760187-0330
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760553/aaaabtio.tel
Line Count: 221
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 APR 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH VIEWS ON LEBANON SUMMARY: QUAI OFFICIAL SAYS THAT GEORGES GORSE PROBABLY
TAGS: PFOR, FR, LE, XF, (GISCARD D'ESTAING, VALERY), (GORSE, GEORGES), (FRANGIE), (SERVANT, HENRI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006